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**DECISION**



**THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL  
OF THE UNITED STATES**  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20548

*H. DUNN  
4P*

**FILE:** B-183563

**DATE:** February 8, 1978

**MATTER OF:** H. M. Christopherson - travel expenses - transportation  
for house hunting - Reconsideration

**DIGEST:** When an employee accepts a transfer and, after making a trip to the new station for purpose of finding permanent quarters, declines the transfer, he may not be reimbursed amounts expended for travel incident to such a trip.

This decision is in response to a request by Mrs. Helga M. Christopherson for reconsideration of our decision B-183563, July 14, 1976, which denied her claim for reimbursement of the transportation expenses of round trip between Oakland, California, and Germantown, Maryland, as part of a house hunting trip incident to a proposed transfer. The facts of this case were fully stated in our decision of July 14, 1976, and will not be repeated except as pertinent to the present discussion of the case.

The claim was disallowed for the reason that Mrs. Christopherson, an employee of the Energy Research and Development Administration, failed to complete the transfer and chose instead to remain in Oakland. The administrative report furnished our Office indicated that Mrs. Christopherson decided not to effect the transfer since her husband was unwilling to make the move. Mrs. Christopherson now takes exception to this version of her explanation for not effecting the transfer to Germantown, and, to the extent that the explanation as reported was dispositive of the case, she requests reconsideration.

Mrs. Christopherson has provided us with the following explanation of her action:

"When I accepted the position of Chief, Executive Development Branch, GG-15, in July 1974, I did so on the assumption of a relatively stable employment situation in AEC for at least the next year. I was informed that reorganization legislation involving creation of ERDA was virtually dead for the remainder of the 93rd Congress. I had firm understandings with the Director, Division of Personnel, as to the parameters of the job, supervision and supervisory relationships, and support for the Executive Development

Program by AEC leadership. Standards and requirements were clearly understood and agreed to by me with the then existing AEC Headquarters personnel. During the week I was in Washington, the ERDA legislation resurfaced, and it became clear that ERDA would be established by the end of the 93rd Congress. It also became clear that a new ERDA leadership would replace the old AEC leadership, that there would be a new Director of the Division of Personnel, and all the expectations and understandings I had about the nature of the position, support for it, clout behind it, and potential impact of it, would undergo radical revision. In my view, the conditions of employment had changed so that acceptance was no longer indicated. I discussed these reasons with both the Deputy General Manager and the Director, Division of Personnel of the AEC, and they were accepted.

"That the job became substantially different on establishment of ERDA can be seen, not only in the new ERDA leadership and the new Director, Division of Personnel, but also in the fact that the position which I accepted no longer exists. Management of the Executive Development program is now vested in an Assistant Director for Executive Development and Training in the Division of Personnel, at the GG-16 level (a level for which I could not qualify in 1974).

"I did not state that I would not accept the Headquarters position because my husband was unwilling to make the move. \* \* \*

"I must emphasize that my husband and I were both committed to make the move. As an example of our interest, we even had a special under-seat carrier built for our pet cockatoo (a rare and valuable bird) and paid to transport it to Washington with us, where we had arranged to have it cared for until we made the move. We would not have gone to this trouble if our intent was not to make the move. \* \*

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"Input to the Comptroller General indicated that I notified the Director, Division of Personnel, of my decision to withdraw my acceptance on the day after I arrived in Washington on August 12, 1974. In fact, such notification was not given until the following Thursday, August 15."

Although it is obvious from this statement that Mrs. Christopherson's perceptions of her proposed new position as Chief, Executive Development Branch, had changed substantially, her concerns were speculative and in the nature of conjecture at the time she reneged on her acceptance. It is significant that the job offer was not withdrawn by the agency, nor was she asked to accept a different position or a position with different responsibilities than those originally contemplated.

Even though Mrs. Christopherson's version of what influenced her decision to remain in Oakland differs markedly from the earlier administrative explanation, it does not change the basis for our prior decision. To reiterate, the second sentence of FTR 2-1.5a(1)(a) specifies that failure by an employee to effect the transfer may constitute a violation of the service agreement which the employee is obligated to sign. Section 2-4.3a and section 2-1.5a(1)(a) of the FTR requires that the employee complete his transfer to receive travel and transportation benefits. In the present case, there is no indication in the record that the reason for the employee not accepting the transfer was not completely within the employee's control or that her travel order was cancelled for official reasons. Instead, the record indicates that the reason the employee did not transfer was personal, namely, that her expectations about the nature of the position had been substantially changed as a result of the knowledge she gained while on her house hunting trip. FTR 2-4.3a makes clear, however, that such a trip may not be permitted at Government expense "where a purpose of the trip is to permit the employee to decide whether he will accept the transfer."

In view of the above and upon review, we find no basis that would warrant changing the conclusion reached in our decision of July 14, 1976.

Deputy

  
Comptroller General  
of the United States